

## OUR FORESTS IN DANGER.

BY E. J. TOKER.

THAT Canada is a land of forests is a belief that is very deeply rooted. This is natural, for old Canada was chiefly woodland, and the settlers, whether from France or from the British Islands, were pictured, truly enough, as hewing out their farms and their homes from the dense growth of primeval pine or maple, beech, oak, walnut or spruce. Now, however, this conception must be largely modified for two reasons. In the first place, much of the newer Canada, far from being forest-clad, consists largely of vast treeless plains, sparsely wooded at intervals with inferior timbers. Besides this, even in the older provinces, the forests have proved not to be inexhaustible, as was formerly supposed, and they are fast disappearing. Even in Ontario, in regions not long ago unbroken woodland, the denudation has been carried so far, that looking from an elevation the country appears less timbered than the landscape viewed from an English hilltop. The lumbermen have to go further and further back in order to obtain logs for their mills, and recognize that new "timber limits" are becoming scarce. The "inexhaustible forest" idea is no longer tenable.

Thoughtful men have pointed out the danger—have called attention to the inevitable results of a continuance in such improvident courses. Unfortunately, however, their warnings and advice have made very little impression, and have had no practical effect. It almost seems, indeed, as if the idea of a boundless wealth of woodland—of forests with exhaustless supplies of timber—would survive the very forests themselves.

It is high time that the hand of the destroyer were stayed—that the ap-

peal, "woodman spare that tree," should be no longer a mere song. It is still more desirable that our surviving forests, or large areas of them, should be treated in accordance with that scientific forestry which is not only conservative, but also reproductive. Unfortunately there are difficulties in the way. The Canadian Government, among its extensive crown lands, has comparatively little forest, and as a general rule the timber is not of the best quality. The woodlands also are so situated as to be subject to imperious demands for local consumption, so that they can hardly be spared to serve as permanent forest. Very wisely, parks, as in the case of the Algonquin Park, have been reserved to keep a part of our public domain in a state of nature, but unfortunately these tracts cannot be called forests. Much is also being done by the Canadian authorities to encourage and facilitate planting on our great plains; the experimental farms—both central and local—rearing and distributing large quantities of young trees of kinds that it is thought may be most likely to be successful. This is of very great utility, as leading to the formation of plantations and windbreaks giving much needed shelter, helping to modify the climate, and promising at no very distant period to augment the supply of firewood, fence rails, railway ties and even building timber. But with the comparatively small estates of our country this is hardly likely to lead to the establishment of forests, which in any event would be a far slower and more costly process than the preservation of those already in existence.

The Provinces are the great forest owners of Canada. With them rests the determination of the question